

# United States Department of the Interior



## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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In Reply Refer to:

DEC 08 2009

4700/1792 (NV-010) (NV-010-18)

Dear Interested Party:

The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Calico Mountain Complex Wild Horse Capture Plan and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) are now available and can be viewed online at [http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/wfo/blm\\_information/nepa0.html](http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/wfo/blm_information/nepa0.html). Hardcopies are available upon request from the Winnemucca District Office.

The EA analyzed the effects of the proposed gather of wild horses in the following Herd Management Areas (HMAs): Black Rock Range East, Black Rock Range West, Calico Mountains, Granite Range, and Warm Springs Canyon. These HMAs are collectively referred to as the Calico Mountain Complex (Complex) in the EA. The Complex is located just north of Gerlach, Nevada. Public lands outside of the aforementioned HMAs are included in the Complex boundary which spans over 540,000 acres across Humboldt and Washoe counties.

The decision authorizes the Proposed Action/Alternative 1, to gather approximately 2,432-2,736 wild horses. The gather will commence on or about December 28, 2009 and continue for 50 – 60 days. Approximately 2,432-2,468 excess wild horses will be removed and transported to a holding facility in Fallon, Nevada. The estimated post gather population would be 572 wild horses which represents a genetically viable population.

This gather is needed to achieve and maintain the established Appropriate Management Level (AML) range of 572 to 952 wild horses. The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (WFRHBA) of 1971 mandates the Bureau to “*protect the range from the deterioration associated with overpopulation*”, “*remove excess animals from the range so as to achieve appropriate management levels*”, and “*to preserve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship in that area*”. Completion of the gather will protect wild horse health and address range deterioration associated with the current overpopulation of wild horses as authorized under Section 3(b) (2) of the 1971 WFRHBA.

A removal only alternative (Alternative 2) was analyzed in the EA. This alternative was not selected because Alternative 1 provided a greater opportunity to decrease the annual growth rate and reduce the necessity for and frequency of future gathers. A No Action Alternative was also analyzed but not selected. Not conducting a gather at this time would not achieve AMLs, would not remove wild horses outside of HMAs and Tribal lands, and would not manage the population size. Moreover, not removing the excess horses would not be consistent with requirements of the WFRHBA and 43 CFR §4700, Protection, Management and Control of Wild Free-Roaming

Horses and Burros.

A Preliminary EA was made available for a 30 day public comment period that ended November 22, 2009. In excess of 10,000 comments were received from individuals, organizations and agencies, although the majority of these consisted of form letters expressing the same or similar range of concerns. All comments were reviewed. Substantive comments were utilized to finalize the EA. Other comments received were either outside the scope of this environmental analysis or are matters of opinion or view point which did not affect the analysis. A summary of comments table is also available on the website named above.

If you have any questions or need additional information please contact me at 775-623-1500 or at the above address.

Sincerely,



Gene Seidlitz  
District Manager  
Winnemucca District